

**TESTIMONY OF ELIZABETH SOUTHERLAND
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U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CONSUMER PROTECTION, PRODUCT SAFETY, AND INSURANCE
UNITED STATES SENATE
May 21, 2009**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Elizabeth Southerland. I am the Acting Deputy Director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on EPA's role in federal agency efforts to address issues associated with Chinese drywall.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is the lead federal agency regarding the issue of Chinese drywall. EPA is now working with CPSC, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and its Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the Florida Department of Health, and other state and federal agencies to help determine what health risks are posed by Chinese drywall.

At the request of ATSDR, EPA's Environmental Response Team (ERT) in Edison, New Jersey is assisting federal efforts by undertaking analysis of the chemical composition of samples of Chinese drywall. ERT analyzed two samples of Chinese drywall product from Florida homes provided by ATSDR and four drywall product samples manufactured in the United States.


EPA completed its initial content analysis of two samples of Chinese drywall taken from Florida homes. The two pieces of Chinese drywall tested appear to have higher levels of sulfur

and strontium than four pieces of domestically produced stock drywall obtained from local stores in Edison, New Jersey. I have submitted a copy of the ERT analysis as an attachment to my testimony.

Beyond this analysis, EPA is chairing a federal and state technical group to develop protocols for home indoor air sampling to characterize the gaseous emissions that may be causing indoor air problems under varying temperature and humidity. This effort consists of two phases. During Phase I, EPA will analyze fifteen drywall samples provided by the CPSC, conduct literature searches, identify chemical(s) and sulfur gases of potential concern that may be responsible for observed odors, and develop/modify analytical methods for air monitoring.

During Phase II, three houses in Florida and three houses in Louisiana will be selected to field test the validity of the draft protocol in consultation with CPSC, CDC, and the respective states. This activity will also help refine the list of suspected causative agents. EPA Phase 2 will commence during the first week of June.

CPSC is currently designing a series of chamber tests to evaluate “off-gases” derived when drywall samples from a variety of US and Chinese manufacturers are exposed to varying temperature and humidity. The results obtained from EPA Phase I and II activities, in addition to chamber studies being performed by the CPSC, will be used to prepare a protocol for CPSC and states to use when conducting indoor air sampling of homes in Florida, Louisiana and other states throughout the nation. EPA expects a joint federal-state agreed upon air monitoring protocol to be completed by the end of June 2009.



Once the joint federal-state agreed upon air monitoring protocol is established, CPSC may utilize a contractor to conduct large scale home testing in accordance with this protocol. ATSDR is expected to utilize Phase I, Phase II, chamber studies, and home air monitoring data to conduct human health risk assessments.

EPA will continue to support federal and state efforts to address Chinese drywall and help determine what actions will be necessary to ensure protection of human health and the environment. Thank you again for inviting me to testify here today, and I look forward to answering any questions that you might have.

